

With respect to paragraph three (3), please amend without prejudice Figure 1 as indicated in red ink on the copy of amended Figure 1 provided with the Letter To The Official Draftsperson. Please enter Figure 1 as amended.

With respect to paragraph four (4), it is respectfully submitted that the Schneider reference, U.S. Patent No. 6,109,102, is not prior art as to the present application, and therefore Figure 2 is proper as presented. Since no changes are believed to be necessary to Figure 2, it is respectfully requested that the requirement to amend Figure 2 be withdrawn.

With respect to paragraphs six (6) and seven (7), claims 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Schneider, U.S. Patent No. 6,109,102. The earliest foreign priority date of December 20, 1996, as claimed in the present application, precedes the § 102(e) date of May 29, 1997 of the cited reference. To establish that the rejected claims, which were rejected in view of the cited reference, are entitled to the foreign priority date of December 20, 1996, Applicants have submitted an Affidavit of Accuracy that certifies the earlier filed English translation of German Application No. 196 53 262.0 (on which foreign priority is based) with this response. In view of this certification of the earlier filed English translation, which plainly establishes the foreign priority date of December 20, 1996, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections of claims 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). (See M.P.E.P. § 201.15).

In summary, it is respectfully submitted that claims 10 to 29 are allowable over the references relied upon for the reasons discussed above.

CONCLUSION

In view of all of the above, it is believed that the drawing requirements and the rejections of the claims have been obviated, and that all of the presently pending claims are

allowable. It is therefore respectfully requested that the rejections be reconsidered and withdrawn, and that the present application issue as early as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

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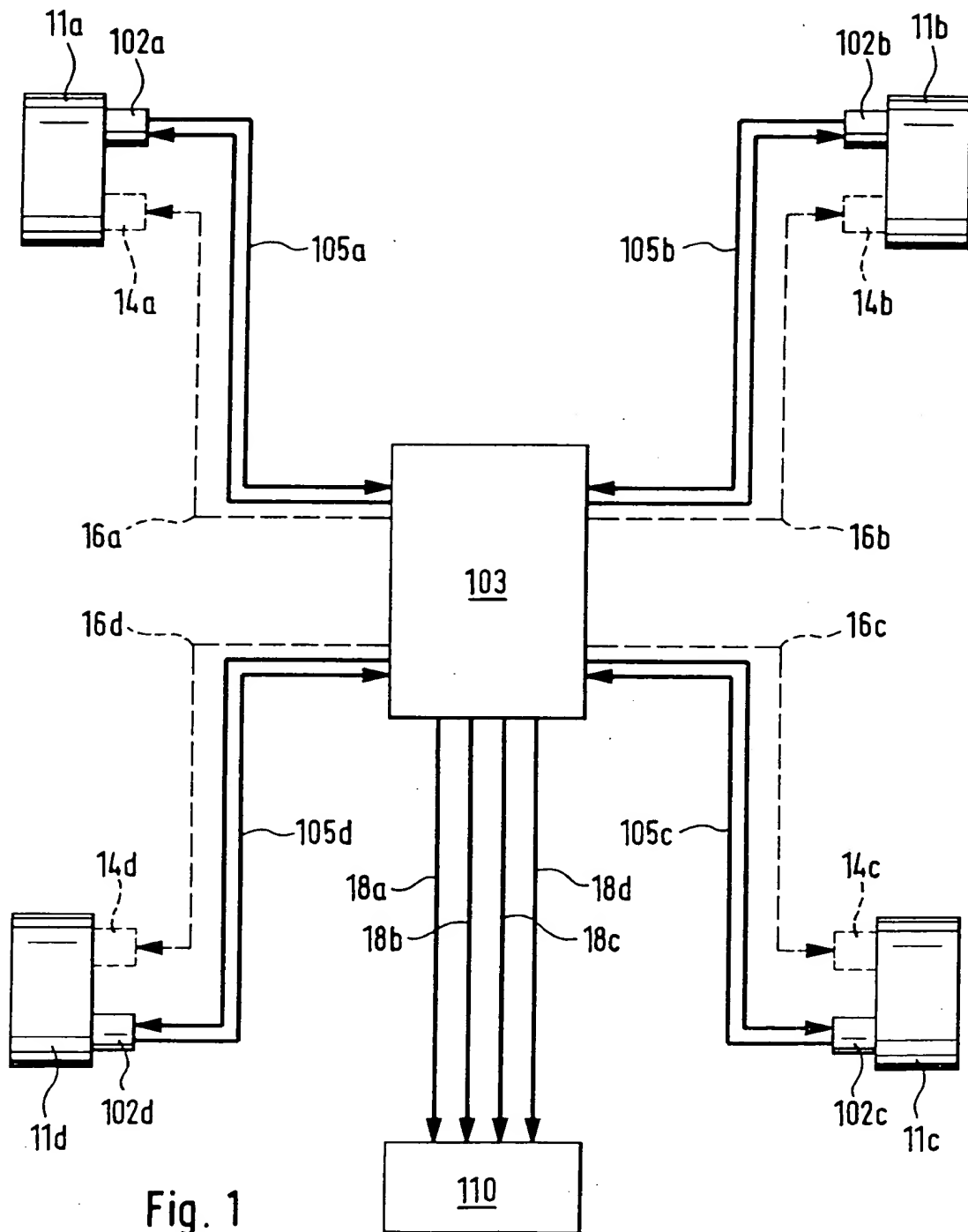


Fig. 1

PRIOR ART